



Building Communities of Trust

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, July 18, 2011

Last week, "the Feds" visited Pioneer High School to present an initiative collaborating with cities to prevent a terrorist action. They distributed a brochure titled "Building Communities of Trust."

The Feds included the Department of Justice and the FBI. I attended to hear first-hand the details and the comments from attendees that were assembled. Most of the attendees represented various groups like the ACLU, South Bay Islamic Association, Little Saigon Foundation, Labor Unions, Silicon Valley DeBug, NAACP, local law enforcement and the San Jose Independent Police Auditor. Several of these groups are also on the police chief's Community Advisory Board.

The Feds' goal nationally is, if in the line of duty police observe suspicious behavior of a person or a group, the local police pass it on to the Feds. The idea is that if all cities participate then enough collected data on suspicious behavior might result in an analyst spotting a trend and thus investigating the behavior(s) further.

There were concerns raised about privacy and a possible police state. The fact is that our daily routines are already tracked and that data is sold to others. I am referring to all of our credit/debit card transactions where all of our transactions are data mined for what we buy including brand, where we buy and what time. This is a much more comprehensive collection of data than random observations from the police. The internet is another area where we have given up privacy.

There was also a concern from attendees that this data would be used for racial profiling. The Feds said that most of the data that comes in today does not even have a name associated with it and they are only gathering data about suspicious behaviors, whomever it involves.

Other concerns that were raised that all the presenters were Caucasian, followed by questions like: What is the redress procedure if incorrect observations are made of an individual? Will there be sensitivity training of police by race? Who has access to the data? Will

this involve collection of data on minors? How would they make sure that data collected does not end up of having disproportionate numbers from a certain race?

Cities do not have to participate so San Jose will have to decide whether or not it should opt in.

Do you think San Jose should opt in or opt out? An alternative might be using technology like 24/7 video surveillance of sensitive areas, as is done in other cities nationally and globally.

I think San Jose should participate, since data in a silo is less valuable than data that is aggregated and shared. Cities need help from the Feds on possible terrorist events since they are looking at the big picture, but the Feds need the eyes and ears of individuals to connect the dots. If cities are able to participate in other federal initiatives like affordable housing, environmental compliance and transportation requirements than certainly we should participate in avoiding a tragedy that could rock the local economy and individual freedom of movement. If a terrorist action can be avoided by simply passing on information about suspicious behavior we would be so fortunate.

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